



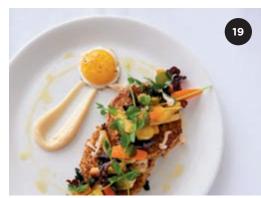
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CITY PAGES

January 27-February 2, 2016





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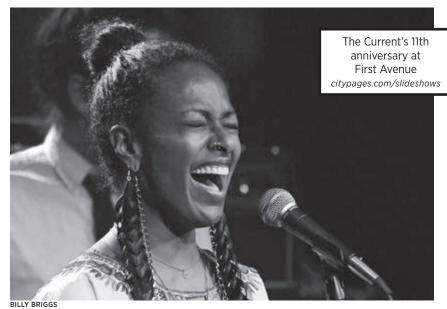


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THE SHORTLIST



CLOWN CAR

38%

Percentage of Minnesotans with a favorable opinion of Marco Rubio, the only presidential candidate in a Star Tribune poll whose favorable rating surpasses his unfavorable rating

2%

Rubio's lead in Minnesota over Ted Cruz in the Republican field 34%

Hillary Clinton's lead over Bernie Sanders in the Democratic field

61%

Percentage of voters who view Donald Trump and Jeb Bush unfavorably, the worst among all candidates

"Here I thought the U was built to establish a football team and support the skollar athletes of basketball and hockey."

Reader Clarence Rutherford responding to "Faculty file for union to bring the U's focus back to the classroom," at citypages.com.

RACKETS

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY health care costs are forever on the rise, cast your eyes to Eden Prairie and Golden Valley. There you will find the offices of Optum, the health plan management company with a gift for sponging staggering coin from the medical system

In 2014, it generated \$48 billion by playing the middle man between patients and their doctors. A year later, that figure soared to \$68 billion. But one thing remains clear: It's still Obama's fault.

SCHOOLING

THE STUNNING DECLINE in craftsmanship among Minnesota's armed robbers was no more evident than last week, when Benjamin Flanders tried to knock off a Payless Shoes in Coon Rapids.

Police surrounded the store. Flanders allegedly took employees hostage, but soon surrendered, presumably embarrassed by his meager take of modestly priced dress shoes. He's been charged with robbery, kidnapping, and failing to conduct a cost-benefit analysis before stealing discount footwear.

MYSTERY TRUCK

A white driver seems intent on harming black people

ouglas Mackbee feared for his wife's safety. So he put out a call for attention, for help, alerting friends and authorities to what happened to his wife.

He got the attention and he might still get that help. All it took was 1,700 Facebook shares, a horrifying story, and an unforgettable photo to match.

Mackbee first posted the tale to Facebook on January 11, using a half-smiling photo of his bride, Charmaine. According to Mackbee, a case manager with Catholic Charities, Charmaine was driving home after dropping off their child when she noticed a truck next to her was repeatedly honking its horn.

She tried to let the driver pass, Mackbee writes, but that wasn't the point.

"She sped up, he sped up," he wrote. "Then he swerved his vehicle into hers attempting to crash into her driver side and ultimately succeeding in running her off the road."

When the truck was past her, Charmaine saw the vague but undoubtedly threatening message it carried: A wooden

A wooden board in the back of the truck carried a message: "NOW NIGGA."

board in the back of the truck said "NOW NIGGA."

Mackbee described the driver as a middle-aged white guy with a "long red beard," traveling with a younger, clean-shaven passenger, also white. The motive for this attempted assault, Mackbee guesses, was "DWB [Driving While Black] and looking something like a Muslim." (Sometimes Charmaine has a "bad hair day" and wraps a scarf over her head.)

In a second post last week, he says several of his coworkers have seen the same vehicle, with the same message in the truck bed, driving around south Minneapolis. This post added that the truck had been "running up on the sidewalk attempting to run over black teenagers waiting on the bus stop."

He also posted a photo: the truck with its wooden board and a visible license plate – 564 DEP – which ought to come in handy if police want to find the guy behind the wheel.

The post went viral on Facebook and Twitter. Since alerting the public, he's been connected with Minneapolis police and had arranged to meet with investigators.

Police spokesman John Elder confirmed that a report had been filed, and that an active case had been turned over to investigators.

"We're in the infancy of the investigation," Elder said. "We'll continue to plow through it." -MIKE MULLEN



Douglas Mackbee's wife, Charmaine



Ignore Iowa

Move along, people. It's just a passing freak show.

he circus comes to a neighboring town, but the train derails.

Beasts and freaks once locked behind bars escape and begin to roam the street.

The townspeople are oddly calm about their new guests. They stroke the elephant's leathery hide and ignore the massive dung piles in their yards.

They invite the freaks home for dinner. Some residents fall in love, and begin to make plans for strange weddings and a stranger future.

This is how you should think of the Iowa caucuses, where a dozen presidential candidates are hugging cornstalks and wrasslin' pigs, anything to woo voters in our southern neighbor. Only the sideshow monsters are treated seriously — generously, even — handed microphones and asked to opine on matters of state.

As of this week, Ted Cruz and Donald Trump are locked in a head-to-combover battle for the state's most conservative conservatives, racing to out-racist (Trump) and out-God (Cruz) each other.

Just when it couldn't get any weirder, Trump plucked Sarah Palin off whatever merry-go-round she'd been riding. Mama Grizzly's endorsement was a series of disconnected crimes against the mother tongue.

"What about the rest of us?" Palin asked a stupefied crowd in Ames. "Right-winging, bitter-clinging, proud clingers of our guns, our God, and our religion, and our Constitution."

Seasoned observers called the speech one of the most incomprehensible pieces of rhetoric in the history of the Englishspeaking peoples. In the next breath, they predicted it would put Trump over the top.

Do yourself a favor: Find the damn remote and change the channel to something that matters.

Iowa has led the most significant election on this planet since the 1970s. The state's Democratic voters have selected well, backing eventual nominees Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, Al Gore, John Kerry, and Barack Obama.

But Iowa's Republicans suck at picking. Always have. Back in 1988, George H.W. Bush finished third behind runner-up *Pat Robertson*, a guy who predicted the world would end in 1982.

Iowa's why George W. Bush had all the momentum in 2000. The turning, pandering point came when Bush told a debate crowd that Jesus Christ was his favorite political philosopher.

There are votes to be found on the margins of discourse — not a lot nationally, but in Iowa enough. Dangle a cross from your neck and announce plans to appoint the Holy Spirit as Secretary of the Interior. It'll turn off even rational-thinking Christians, but you'll get the 30 percent you need to win the Iowa caucus.

Bush's strategy was copied to similar effect in 2008, when Republicans chose Mike Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor who got his start as a televangelist. (Think Pat Robertson — breaded, deepfried, and anointed in gravy.)

In 2012, the GOP swung for Rick Santorum, who ran on a three-plank platform: Abortion is wrong, homosexuality is gross, and porn makes me nervous.

This history informs the histrionics

of today, with Ted Cruz treating stump speeches like calls to prayer. A couple weeks ago, he told a room of Iowans that his campaign's goal is to "awaken and energize the body of Christ." The Good Lord was apparently sleepy after a 2,000-year snooze. *Quick! Get Jesus some coffee!*

Trump is a more recent convert, sud-

Mama Grizzly's
endorsement
was a series of
disconnected
crimes against the
mother tongue.

denly claiming to "love" the Bible, the only book he has pretended to read that he didn't pretend to write. He tried talking scripture at Liberty University, the pseudo-school founded by Robertson, but came off as a fraud when he referred to Second Corinthians as "Two Corinthians." Clearly he'd mistaken the passage for the popular Greek rap duo.

Safer and smarter was handing the mic to Palin and letting her ramble to the rabble. Her words are confusing, but her dogma is



Mike Mullen

nothing if not deeply felt. When Palin gets going, it's easy to think she sees herself as a character from the Good Book itself. I'm guessing she appears somewhere in Revelation.

The holy ghosts of Huckabee and Santorum are still around and running, but both are miles behind 2016's leading cretins. Larry Sabato, renowned reader of political tarot cards, blamed these twists of faith on voters' disappointment that the horses they backed came up lame. Santorum and Huckabee "have been branded losers," Sabato told the Omaha World-Herald.

That is, Iowans had their feelings hurt by the two. "You lied! You never told us you were a loser!"

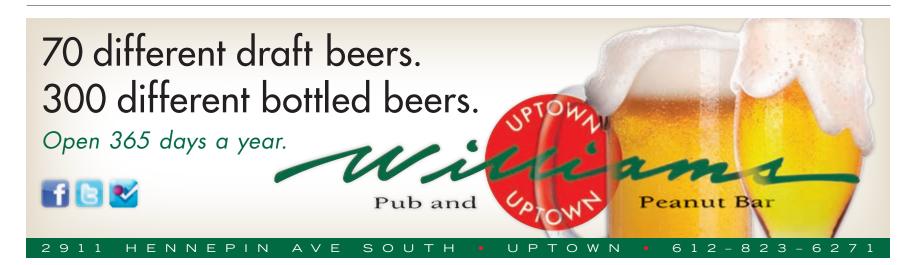
They tried. The problem was, a few too many Iowans mistook messianic messaging for gospel.

None of this is a reflection on the average Iowan, or even the average Iowa Republican. But the math of this equation always arrives at the same sum. A crowded field plus a rabid pocket of conservative activists equals a terrible winner.

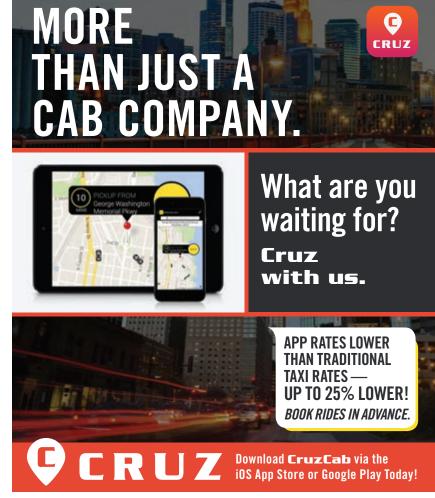
I'm tuning into something with a bit more substance. When does *Wheel of Fortune* come on?

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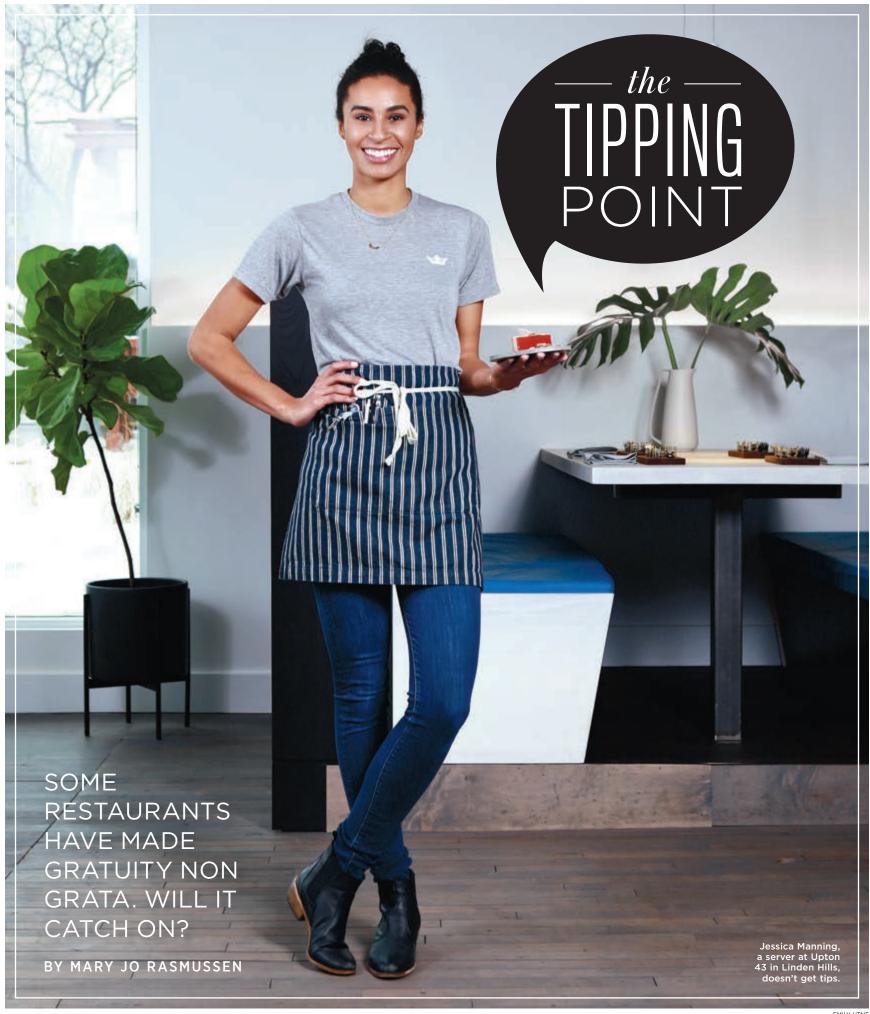
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'm taking a big-ass risk," says chef Wyatt Evans, owner of Heirloom Kitchen & Bar in St. Paul. Evans thinks about this a lot. On a bright but frigid Minnesota morning, he's driving toward Merriam Park to start prepping for dinner service and musing on his decision to make Heirloom, which opened in December, a tip-free restaurant. Opening a restaurant is always a risky proposition. Introducing the concept of a service charge in lieu of tipping doubles down on that risk.



"It would have been a hell of a lot easier to do what everyone else is doing," he says. "I'm sticking my neck out to say, 'Can this be done?""

Last year, prominent New York restaurateur Danny Meyer announced that he would eliminate tipping at all 13 of his restaurants by the end of 2016. The news sent shock waves through the industry. Why would a successful businessman risk employee and consumer backlash by eliminating tipping? Why would anyone?

"Bottom line, I just think it's the

right thing to do," says Evans. At his restaurant, all staff receive a set rate of pay. He adds an 18 percent service charge to every tab, which is split evenly between everyone who worked a given shift. If there's a busy night, everyone, including the kitchen, benefits.

Eliminating gratuity and paying all of the restaurant staff a salary addresses one of the biggest issues in the dining world right now: the disparity between what tipped servers can earn and the low pay of the kitchen staff.

"The highest paid person in my kitchen is making half or less of what servers are making," says Lenny Russo, chef-owner of Heartland in St. Paul's Lowertown. "And everyone in my kitchen earns more than minimum wage."

Industry insiders will tell you the current system isn't working, even if they can't agree on how to fix it. Is the end of tipping the future of a more stable restaurant workforce? Or is the act of leaving gratuity so ingrained that the tip-free model will flash and fade like the cronut?

GRATUITOUS

Leaving a tip after a meal is something most of us don't even think about. You eat, you drink, you pay, you tip.

Ironically, the American tradition of tipping was adopted in the late 1800s by wealthy Americans who brought the custom back from Europe - where they no longer tip. The origin of the word is thought to be an acronym for the phrase "to insure promptitude."

"Something is wrong when people can't make a living working a 40-hour-a-week job"

> Early on, tipping came under fire in the United States for being anti-democratic. There was even a movement to abolish tipping, and an Anti-Tipping Society of America. In the early 1900s, six states passed anti-tipping laws, all of which were repealed by 1926. The tradition of tipping has been firmly ensconced in our dining experience ever since. In the 1960s, Congress decreed that workers could be paid a lower minimum wage if a portion of their salary came from tips, further cementing the role of gratuities in the hospitality industry.

> Minnesota is one of seven states that say tipped employees must be paid the minimum wage, even if they receive tips on top of that amount. Restaurant owners argue that, in effect, they are subsidizing

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Joe Radaich opened Domo Gastro and got rid of all the things he hated about the restaurant biz — including gratuity.

EMILY UTNE

the wages of employees who earn well above the \$9 minimum. In some cases, servers take home more than the owners themselves.

When Joe Radaich opened Domo Gastro in northeast Minneapolis in December, correcting this lopsided pay scale was part of the plan. He was formerly the owner of Sporty's Bar, and as he thought about opening a new restaurant, "I decided I would get rid of all the things I hated about the business."

That meant eliminating tips. It also meant keeping a revolving door between front-of-house and back-of-house positions. At Domo Gastro, staff roles are fluid; Radaich took his cue from the trailblazers at Travail, where employees rotate through all jobs in the restaurant, from cook to server to bartender.

From there, "Things just got more and more idealistic," says Radaich. He decided to stay closed on Mondays and Tuesdays so all staff could have two days off in a row, a rarity in the restaurant world. "I'm very excited about the idea of being able to try this and be a model," he says.

Erick Harcey, chef-owner of Victory 44 since 2009, just opened his second restau-

rant, Upton 43, in Linden Hills. He's also nixed tipping, but instead of implementing a service charge, he raised menu prices by an average of 18 percent. A bowl of squash soup goes for \$12; no entree sells for less than \$22. "We don't look at it as charging for service; this is just the price," says Ryan Koller, the general manager at Upton 43 and Victory 44. Servers at both restaurants will start at \$17 an hour versus \$9 plus tips.

Evans, Harcey, Radaich, and a few other restaurant owners are in the vanguard of testing alternative payment ideas in the Twin Cities. Others are waiting, watching to see if this could work.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

Although the Food Network would have you believe otherwise, earning a living as a prep or line cook is one of the least glamorous ways to make money. And diners might be surprised to learn that the prep cook at their favorite restaurant earns not much more than a high school kid filling hard shells at Taco Bell.

Meanwhile, waitstaff earn gratuities over and above the minimum wage mandated



by the state, an arrangement that makes it possible for an experienced server at a popular restaurant to pocket hundreds of dollars on a lucrative Saturday night.

The disparity can create a rift between the back of the house and the front of the

"It gets kind of weird when kitchen staff see waitstaff counting tips," says Emma Reid, who has worked as a server at various restaurants, including five years at the Local. Many restaurants have an unwritten rule about waitstaff not counting tips in front of the back-of-the-house crew.

It's one reason Marshall Brotto, who works at Domo Gastro, is a fan of community tips. "I think thanks (in the form of tips) should be shared," he says. When he worked in the kitchen at Café Lurcat, he saw the front of the house "rake in tons of money," he says. "Watching your hard work be tipped to someone else and not sharing in it is frustrating."

But waitstaff cannot be required to share tips with kitchen staff. "The law is quite clear that tips are the property of the person they are given to," says Dan McElroy, executive vice president of the Minnesota Restaurant Association. While it is common for servers to "tip out" a portion of their gratuities to non-tipped members of the staff at the end of their shift, the decision is up to the individual.



Erick Harcey of Upton 43 and Victory 44 eliminated tipping and raised menu prices to give staff equitable pay.

EMILY UTNE

Steven Brown, owner of Tilia and now St. Genevieve, says he doesn't look at servers as being overpaid as much as he thinks of kitchen workers as being underpaid. Radaich agrees. "Something is wrong

when people can't make a living working a 40-hour-a-week job," he says.

And that limited earning potential for back-of-the-house staff, coupled with the long hours and the physically and mentally stressful nature of the job, has made it increasingly tough for restaurants to hire and retain prep and line cooks, the backbone of every kitchen.

With competition for experienced kitchen help at an all-time high, Pig Ate My Pizza, the always busy offshoot of Travail, announced last August that they would close an extra day a week due to a staff shortage. Last October, Brasserie Zentral decided to close on Sundays citing kitchen staffing problems (before closing permanently in January).

Even Travail, a nominee in the prestigious James Beard Awards and a finalist for Bon Appetit's top 10 new restaurants, struggles to staff its kitchen. There, pay for cooks starts around \$26,000. A talented server at an upscale restaurant can easily earn double that or more.

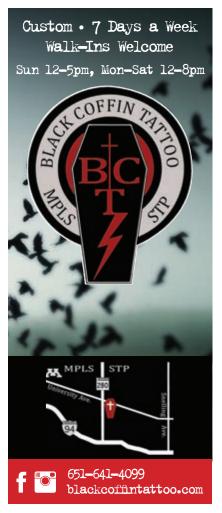
But the tipping system isn't always beneficial for servers. Take-home pay varies wildly. A server's income depends on the whims and generosity of customers. Every diner is a boss, evaluating performance and paying accordingly.

The whole idea is arbitrary and subjective, says Russo, if not sexist, racist, and degrading. "It's a fact that white male servers make more money than anyone else," he says. "[However] if I have a table of eight guys on a business trip here on their way to the strip club, an attractive

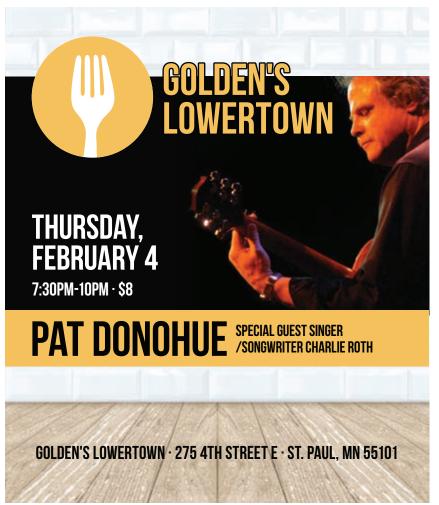












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woman will get a big tip."

There's virtually no other business where you get to penalize the staff for poor service. "When you go to the doctor, you don't get to say, 'I'd like to take \$20 off my bill because the receptionist was kind of rude — and be sure to take that \$20 out of her salary."

Nor do you get to walk back to the kitchen and take \$20 out of the cook's pocket because "the steak was overcooked," says Russo.

A system based on tips also robs restaurant owners of the opportunity to offer incentives in the form of raises and promotions. "Many employees who would make great assistant managers don't want the job, since it would mean less money," says Koller, general manager at Victory 44 and Upton 43. Now that all staff at both restaurants are salaried, he is looking forward to seeing them

freed up to learn new skills without suffering financially.

For all these reasons, Radaich of Domo Gastro predicts that within five years most of the restaurants in the metro area will move to a service charge model. But Heirloom's Wyatt Evans isn't so quick to predict. "The market will win out," he says. "The future will depend on what guests prefer."

ARE YOU BEING SERVED?

Chances are the only way you'll know you're dining in a non-tipping restaurant is because they will tell you. They're proud of what they're doing, of course, but they're also legally obliged to inform diners that their gratuity will not go directly to their server.

At Victory 44 and Upton 43, the host explains tips are not expected and the server repeats it. "Feedback has been incredibly positive from guests," Koller says. "People are curious, they like to hear the story."

Whether the restaurant has opted for a service charge or higher menu prices, they are quick to assuage your fears: You won't pay any more than if you left a 20 percent tip. Sometimes you wind up paying less. If you enjoyed Victory 44's "perfect burger" at its original price of \$15 plus a 20 percent tip, you would have paid a total of \$18; under the new system, it's a dollar less.

But tipping is more than a financial consideration. Many diners like the idea of tipping because they feel it gives them some control over the transaction — a way to express their gratitude, as well as a way to show their displeasure. Without the

option to withhold a tip, what will diners do if they don't like the service?

Simple, says Koller. Do what you would do at any other business: tell the manager.

Koller says he welcomes customer engagement as a learning opportunity. Radaich tells customers that if they have any issues, they should "ask for Joe." He says so far only two people have sought him out to voice concerns. He offered in both cases to remove the service charge

"They have a way to say thanks. It gives validation. We've mastered our craft. Tipping shows that."

from the bill. Both customers declined.

At Domo Gastro, diner Christopher Thomas says he likes having the option to tip, though he adds, "I would gladly give some part of that up to make sure people are treated fairly."

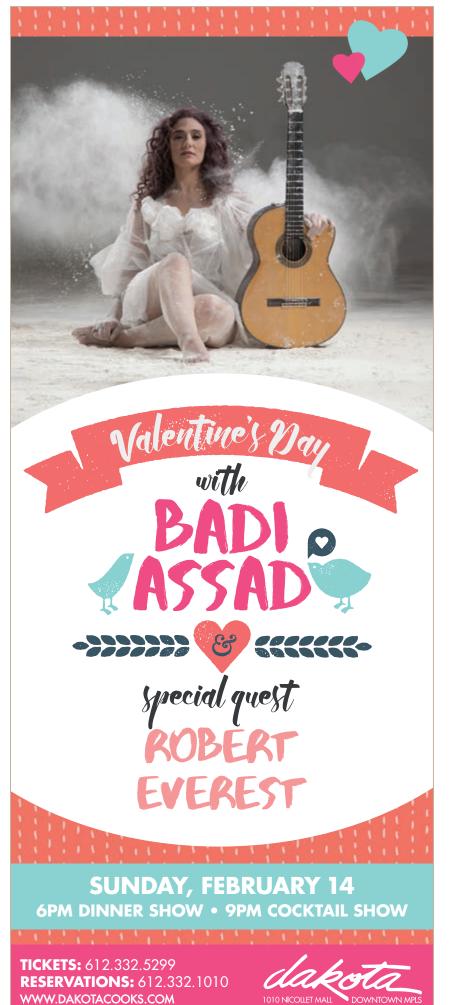
Neither Evans nor Radaich reported anyone questioning the amount of the service charge, or asking if they could leave less of a tip than the service charge. Evans says he actually had to add a tip line to his receipts after repeated requests from customers who wanted to leave an additional gratuity.

One thing non-tipping restaurants have noticed is that a salaried workforce means servers no longer vie for certain lucrative and coveted shifts. "Now a Monday shift is the same as a Saturday shift," says Koller, "so the best servers aren't there only the weekends. It increases the level of service every night."

Michael Rostance, who worked as a chef at Broders' Pasta Bar in south Minneapolis for more than 20 years, sees how service might improve if tips were eliminated. "I've seen people say, 'That person is a lousy tipper, I'm not wasting time on him,' or fawn over someone they know to be a big tipper while ignoring the customer next to him," he says.

He is "cautiously in favor" of the notipping policy in principle. Experienced waitstaff accustomed to the tipping model will be reluctant to take a chance on it, he says.

Morgan Oie, who works at Amazing Thailand, isn't interested in becoming a salaried employee. Leaving with money in her pocket at the end of each shift is a job perk, she says. She knows how hard







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the back of the house is working, and is happy to tip them out at the end of her shift.

Rocky Olson, who has worked in the industry for over four decades and is currently a server at Broders' Pasta Bar, believes that if restaurants go to a no-tip system, they will lose experienced frontof-house employees like him, who have grown accustomed to a certain income. His restaurant career started in the kitchen before moving into managing. He switched to serving when he figured out how much more waiters make than their managers.

But Koller expects the server's mindset will change. Response to a recent help wanted ad was the strongest ever.

HOW THEY VOTE

For many restaurants, keeping the gratuity line is all about dancing with the devil they know. Their diners are familiar and comfortable with tipping.

"It's how they vote," says Tilia's Brown. "If they really thought this was a spectacular experience, they have a way to say thanks. It gives validation. We've mastered our craft. Tipping shows that."

Many believe working for tips elevates the quality of service diners receive. Servers hustle more in pursuit of the Holy Grail of a good tip.

"It's interesting that we're talking about this given the recent eviscerating review of Per Se," says Jd Fratzke, chef-partner at the Strip Club Meat & Fish and Saint Dinette, both in St. Paul. He's referring to a recent New York Times review of renowned chef Thomas Keller's famed New York restaurant, which hinted that service may have suffered since the restaurant eliminated tipping.

There is also concern that adjusting menu prices to be able to pay kitchen staff better would drive customers away. "In this neck of the woods, you have to worry about sticker shock," says Fratzke. Russo concurs. "Do I decide I can no longer serve steak on my menu because if I raise my prices, it will be absurdly expensive?"

Options are limited for restaurant owners grappling with the best way to fix the pay gap. The Minnesota Legislature has consistently rejected a tip credit - a lower minimum wage for employees who also receive tips. Unless the law changes, restaurant owners will continue to pay servers at least \$9.00-\$9.50, starting August 1, when the state minimum increases. Nor can they mandate that waitstaff share tips with the kitchen. For businesses that work on profit margins in the low single digits, there just isn't a lot of extra money to work with.

Russo thinks it is hypocritical that the state won't allow gratuity to apply toward the minimum wage requirement when servers in his restaurant can earn in excess of \$35 an hour. "When you try to legislate things for the greater good, there's always

collateral damage," he says.

The owners of Wilde Roast Café in northeast Minneapolis say they have managed to increase wages and other benefits for employees without a tip credit. "In this business there are things you can control and things you can't," says Tom DeGree, who owns the restaurant with partner Dean Schlaak.

Dialogues with staff "created some soul searching," and in December they began offering paid time off in addition to phasing in pay increases for non-tipped employees so that by April, the pay for dishwashers will go from \$9 an hour to \$14. Cooks will see a bump from between \$10 and \$12 per hour to \$14 per hour. Employees also get one hour of paid time off for every 30 hours worked, so they earn roughly one day off for every week worked. "That only costs 16 cents per hour," says Schlaak.

They're the minority. Most restaurant owners are still weighing their options. The consensus is that something has to change, even if it doesn't happen overnight.

JUMPING TOGETHER

Russo has spent two years analyzing the issue, collecting data, crunching numbers on spreadsheets, and discussing alternatives with his staff. He has also attempted repeatedly to discuss it with elected representatives, to no avail.

People waiting tables support change, he says. "Our service staff know the work of the kitchen contributes to their ability to make those big tips."

Restaurants can't depend on the government to come up with a solution, Russo says, but changes have to follow the law. His waitstaff has come up with three ideas for evening out the wage disparity between themselves and the back of the house. "They were thoughtful, generous, open hearted — and illegal, unfortunately."

Meanwhile, the no-tipping movement is gaining momentum even with large, established restaurant chains. Joe's Crab Shack began testing the waters starting last August at 18 of its restaurants. The company eliminated tipping while upping pay for front-of-the-house staff to between \$12 and \$14 an hour, paying for the increase by raising prices by 12 percent to 15 percent.

The topic is trending locally. Koller had four conversations in one week with people from other restaurants curious about how it's going at Victory 44 and Upton 43. And as Evans puts it, "I've gotten more attention for this [the service charge] than for my food."

Brown feels that the structure of remuneration in restaurants will change "real soon." He says that in his discussions with other restaurant owners, "The opinion among my peers is if we jump [to a nontipping model], we all have to jump together."



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BEAUTY AND THE FEAST

There's a lot to love at the Commodore — you just need to know where to look



The Fitzgerald cocktail named for F. Scott and Zelda who frequented the bar

TONY NELSON

BY MECCA BOS

he kitchen at the newly remodeled Commodore Bar and Restaurant has a bit of a rivalry problem. Any food served within the confines of this art deco stunner is going to somehow feel like an also-ran, like trying to be best friends with the beauty queen. The inset gold leaf ceilings, the lush buttery furniture, the checkerboard dance floor, the beveled mirrors everywhere — it's difficult to decide where to settle your eyes for the greatest admiration.

Everybody comes undone about the fact that F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda lived in the Commodore Hotel and drank heartily and often in the bar, which really means nothing to you if you're not a literature buff. What might mean some-

thing to you is that the bar was designed by a 1930s Hollywood set designer who took his inspiration from ocean liners. You can feel it. It's that transporting.

The simple act of sitting in the deco lounge here is a straightforward pleasure, like a bubble bath or sex. And like either of those endeavors, it's best taken with a libation. The bar program is headed up by Christa Robinson; her contributions are the most exciting part of the project. Naturally, she's focused on drinking trends of that era — pre-Prohibition, a term that gets bandied around a lot but essentially means the golden age of cocktails. She's hyper-focused on local distilleries. As she puts it, she's locked in on stills "within a day's drive — or a bootlegger's drive — to the Twin Cities." We like the spirit of that

The drinks are big and boozy, not those

little eye-dropper affairs that piss you off because you know you'll have to order another in about five minutes. No, these are grown-up things that you can hold with your whole hand. Spend an hour going over the finer points of your crappy day as the cocktail and your cares magically, simultaneously, rinse away.

The Sidecar is a wide-mouthed martini glass of oak-barrel-aged apple brandy and Minnesota-made lemon ginger liqueur, contrary forces merging for a complementary experience. The rim is caked with a smoked bourbon sugar you'll want to lick away like a lollipop. Or try the Zelda, also with intense ginger, blackstrap bitters from local Bittercube, and opulent Prosecco bubbles. It comes finished with a bit of lime and candied ginger on a stick, which you could, in fact, treat like a lollipop.

THE COMMODORE BAR & RESTAURANT

79 Western Ave. N., St. Paul, 651-330-5999 menu items: \$4-\$32 thecommodorebar.com

Beer is served by the bottle or can (they were unable to add a tap system to the historic building), and wines by the glass and bottle are mostly affordable and approachable. There's something for everyone, but a tall frosty flute of rosé bubbles is really the can't-go-wrong choice for this occasion.

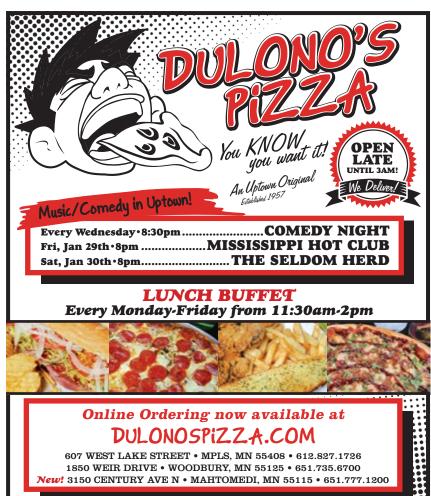
It can almost seem like sacrilege to be slurping, sipping, and slopping in a space so outrageously grand. If the Commodore were a museum, or a home, or a public space, then people could just wander around agog, jaws unhinged, and marvel at its utter beauty. But it's a restaurant













Olive oil poached salmon is classic American cookery done well.

TONY NELSON

and a bar, and so they've come up with comestibles that somehow seem sensible within these sanctified walls. In a very savvy move, they've refrained from going too far into fine dining territory, the obvious temptation. Instead, they've managed to keep the place jovial; it's a space for all occasions, a stop-in-two-or-three-timesa-week type of joint.

All three of the differently appointed lounge areas are seat-yourself, so there is little pressure to make reservations, even during peak weekend hours. The dining room, all grand piano, tiny table lamps, and drama, is reserved for more formal dining.

The price points are impressively egalitarian — as in \$5 for the entire dessert list egalitarian. Starters usually hover under \$10, and when they exceed that, it's worth the splurge. Three sandwich options including a Limousin beef burger, a pork cutlet sandwich, and a veggie burger offer something for the casual diner at \$12 to \$14 a pop, and the only entree over \$30 is the pan-roasted ribeye. Otherwise, prices in the low twenties and teens make us grin with "hey, we can actually afford this place" contentment.

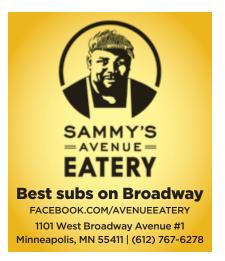
The best way to eat here is with drink in one hand, snack in the other. The smart, \$6 "snacks and relishes" plate arrives at the table as quickly as a bartender can stir a martini. A little hill each of spiced nuts, pickles, olives, crudités with a wee pot of creamy dip, and a couple of garlic toasts means a person can take the edge off the hangries in a civilized way, tout de suite.

Classic apps of beef tartare and shrimp cocktail are done by the book. The tartare is animated with the briny interest of refrigerator pickles; shrimp are plump and al dente with a spot-on horseradish cocktail sauce. Deep-fried ham and cheese croquettes as well as house fries, dusted with rosemary and Parmesan and served with garlic aioli, appeal to the sensible imbiber in search of a base. Both are precisely prepared and playfully indulgent. A roasted red pepper bisque was like drinking red velvet, smooth and sublime.

If you're in it for a true dining experience, with entrees and all the rest, it might be wise to keep expectations in check. Chef Chris Gerster is formerly of the nearby University Club (also run by Commodore ownership), and sometimes the cooking veers a bit into catering territory. Many of these dishes could impress at a plated wedding dinner, but they leave something to be desired if you're in search of ingenuity. This is classic American cookery done mostly well, if not exceedingly so.

Olive oil poached salmon is cooked to midrare temp and anchored by a lake of potato puree that's practically a sauce, enlivened with a fig-almond relish. It was the best of the entrees we sampled. A vegetarian dish of grains with wild mushrooms, glazed vegetables, and a sunny-side-up egg was prettily plated, but was little more than two veggie-burger-quality patties wearing window dressing. A braised rabbit entree was truly unfortunate and off-puttingly bony; woody mushrooms and a white wine cream sauce did nothing to offset the pale, dry flesh which showed no signs of braise. The pork cutlet sandwich with gouda, kraut. apple, and dijon-mayo is a solid rendition of a bar sandwich - no better, no worse - and ultimately a safer bet than the entree list at a fair \$12. Service is swift and excellent; Lorin Zinter, formerly of also excellent Heyday and Il Foro, acts as maître d'.

While the Commodore may very well look like a movie set, a cruise liner, and the belle of the ball, it's really only a bar — a bar fit for dignitaries, ves, but still a bar. Use it as such, and you're going to love it. You're going to love it a lot.







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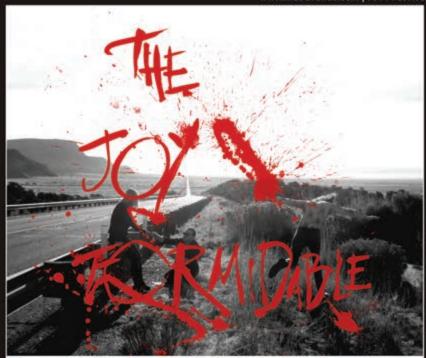
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WEDNESDAY 1/27

COMEDY

MATTHEW BROUSSARD

ACME COMEDY CO.

You might recognize Matthew Broussard as one of the anchors of MTV2's Not Exactly News. "I did a standup showcase, and some people from MTV were there," he explains. "They thought I made a convincing news anchor, which I guess is a compliment?" He reasons that it may have had something to do with his overall diction. Though he grew up mostly in the South, he is accent-free. "It comes from my dad," he notes. "He was a chemist. He grew up a white-trash Cajun and was the first person in his family to get an education. He shed his accent and learned to speak properly so people would take him seriously in the chemistry world." However, Broussard laments his absence of a Southern drawl. "I wish I had an accent; it's so charming. You walk onstage with a Southern accent and people say, 'Oh, he sounds sweet. Let's listen to him." 18+. \$15-\$18. 8 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday; 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday. 708 N. First St., Minneapolis; 612-338-6393. Through Saturday -P.F. WILSON

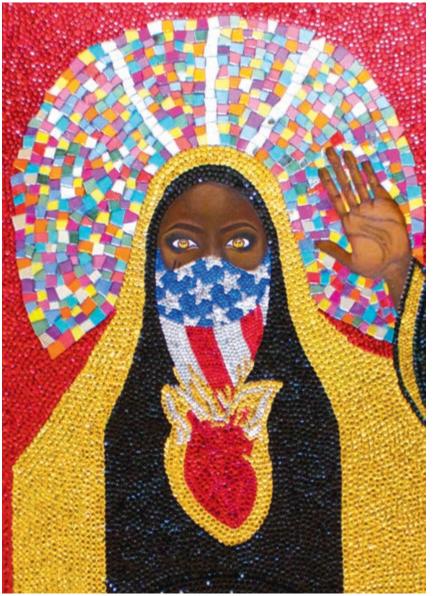
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"Faith [In]Action?" explores the intersection of religion and activism

TANIA L. BALAN-GAUBERT

Shovel. For spectators, the tournament can prove just as invigorating (if not more) than the pro leagues, offering a chance to cheer on community teams. For complete game schedules, see the official U.S. Pond Hockey website: uspondhockey. com. Free. 5 to 9 p.m. Thursday; 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Sunday; 7 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Saturday. 5001 Lake Nokomis Pkwy. W., Minneapolis. Through Sunday -BRAD RICHASON

FESTIVAL 2016 SAINT PAUL WINTER CARNIVAL

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

The Saint Paul Winter Carnival ranks among Minnesota's most singular of traditions. The sprawling festival actually celebrates arctic conditions by offering an array of attractions to suit the tastes of our hardiest inhabitants, who are not

content to merely endure freezing temperatures and unrelenting snowfall. A stroll through Rice Park, the epicenter of the event, provides an ideal starting point as one can marvel at the strikingly designed Mini Ice Palace and associated Ice Sculptures en route to viewing one of the three signature parades (Moon Glow Pedestrian, King Boreas Grand Day, and Vulcan Victory Torchlight). The Minnesota State Fairgrounds also host family-friendly activities in their Snow Park, including a giant snow slide, fire truck rides, and scavenger hunts. Those without children (or seeking some adult diversions) can partake in the seventh annual Beer Dabbler, featuring craft beverages from 120 breweries. The more athletically inclined are welcome to participate in the Securian Winter Run (choose from the 5K, 10K, or half marathon) and/or the 28-hole Disc Golf Ice Bowl. Others might prefer to witness the innovative technologies displayed by the Autonomous Snowplow Competition or view a local movie premiere courtesy of the inaugural Frozen Film series. For a complete list of locations, admission fees, and event schedules, visit the official website at winter-carnival.com, or call the hotline at 651-223-4700. Through February 7 - BRAD RICHASON

THEATER TRAINSPOTTING

PHOENIX THEATRE

If all you know of Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting is Ewan McGregor using "the most disgusting toilet in Scotland," understand that the original book had a lot more about life among the druggedout youth of Edinburgh. "All of the text from the play is lifted straight from the novel, and also focuses on different parts of the book than the movie does," explains Peter Beard, the director of Shadow Horse Theatre's production. In fact, the original stage version predates Danny Boyle's film. "The play is more concerned with the characters and their relationships to one another than with trying to cram every plot point in the novel into an hour and a half," Beard says. Along with its graphic depiction of life on the margins, *Trainspotting* is known for its thick Scottish dialect. That's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ▶



- VOTED BEST ROCK CLUB BY CITY PAGES IN 2015 -1/27 HEY MARSEILLES W/ BAD BAD HATS 7PM

- 1/28 BOWIEOKE: AN ALL BOWIE KARAOKE CELEBRATION HOSTED BY IAN RANS 7:30PM
- NEW SOUND UNDERGROUND AND THE HEARD 8PM
 MODERN RADIO SWEET SIXTEEN FT. VAMPIRE HANDS, HOLLOW BOYS,
 THE CHAMBERMAIDS, OAKS 8PM
 OUTLAW BRUNCH W/ THE FEDERALES 10AM 3PM (NO COVER/ALL AGES)
- CHARLIE PARR: EVERY SUNDAY IN JANUARY W/ WILD HANDS 7PM 1/31
- HOUSE OF DOSH II: A MONTH LONG RESIDENCY 8PM 2/02
- THE GILDED PALACE SINNERS THE MUSIC OF GRAM PARSONS 7:30PM
- 2/05 MALLMAN W/ THE MELISMATICS, CATSAX, LUNCH DUCHESS 8PM
- AU PAIR (FEATURING GARY LOURIS AND DJANGO HASKINS) 8PM MARDI GRAS BRUNCH W/ THE SWAMP KINGS DIS NATE KRANZ & MITCH KERSTEN 10AM 3PM (NO COVER/ALL AGES)
- **BIG GAME WATCH PARTY + PUPPY BOWL 4PM**
- 2/09 HOUSE OF DOSH II: A MONTH LONG RESIDENCY 8PM
- TOO FAST FOR THE DEVIL AND THE NON-PROPHETS 7PM MN MUSIC COALITION PRESENTS BEN LUBECK OF
- FAREWELL MILWAUKEE W/ SILVERBACK COLONY, MARY BUE 7PM
- THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS W/ SPIDER JOHN KOERNER + A LATE NIGHT SET BY THE ICICLES 8PM
- THE CACTUS BLOSSOMS W/ FRANKIE LEE A LATE NIGHT SET BY THE ICICLES 8PM 2/13
- JAZZ BRUNCH FT. JAMES BUCKLEY TRIO, JAKE HANSEN, JT BATES 10AM 3PM (NO COVER/ALL AGES)
- **VALENTINE'S DAY WITH ERIK KOSKINEN 7PM**
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Cloudy art can actually be illuminating

CAITLIND R.C. BROWN AND WAYNE GARRETT

CONTINUED FROM THURSDAY ▶

intact. Local performer Jim Aherns has coached the actors on the dialect. "We will be using subtitles in specific places...that we will need to translate for the audience," Beard says. No matter the accent, the stories of Mark, Sick Boy, and the rest are still familiar. "If you took out the dialects, the slang, and the soccer references, this play could very easily be a representation of Detroit, Baltimore, or any number of American cities," Beard adds. \$20; Monday shows are pay-as-able. 8 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays, Mondays; 5 p.m. Sundays. 2605 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-377-2285. Through February 13 -ED HUYCK

COMEDY JOHN ROY

RICK BRONSON'S HOUSE OF COMEDY "A lot of different cities, a lot of different hotel rooms," is how comedian John Rov describes the past few months. It hasn't all been touring, though. He's done appearances on Conan and @Midnight, and made a well-received Funny or Die video with fellow comic James Adomian. "It's called Bernie Sanders Is Not Boring, and it's gotten a lot of attention," Roy reports, "They played it on Chris Matthews' show on MSNBC." Roy has also been plugging away at his podcast, Don't Ever Change, where he talks to comedians about what they were like in high school. Though we hear a lot of so-called origin stories from comics, Roy insists there's quite a bit of variety in people's backstories — if you know how to dig. "There are only so many times you can hear 'nerd boy discovers punk rock and becomes confident.' I try to have a diverse range of guests on to discuss what challenges they faced in high school." He figures this is probably similar to other professions, though. "I imagine if my show was about people who ended up in finance, they would all have some kind of high

school challenge, too. It's just that high school is where the bread is being baked." 18+; 21+ later shows. \$15-\$22. 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Friday; 9:45 p.m. Friday; 9:30 p.m. Saturday; 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 408 E. Broadway, Mall of America, Bloomington: 952-858-8558. Through Sunday -P.F. WILSON

ART/GALLERY FAITH [IN]ACTION?

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson by police has turned the spotlight on the violence and deaths of people of color at the hands of law enforcement. A new exhibition, "Faith [In]Action?" at United Theological Seminary's gallery in Bigelow Chapel, looks at the role of the faith community to respond to injustice against African-Americans. A sister exhibit to "Hands Up, Don't Shoot — HER" at Intermedia Arts, "Faith [In] Action?" features artists working in painting, mixed media, digital arts, and sculpture chosen by a jury panel and co-curated by Obsidian Arts director Roderic Southall and Shervl Schwyhart. The opening reception on Thursday, January 28, from 6 to 8 p.m., will feature spoken word by Brittany Lynch, host of KFAI's Soul Tools Radio, as well as a panel conversation with Black Lives Matter leader Lena Gardner, ordained minister and Huffington Post blogger Ashley Harness, and Southall. 3000 Fifth St. NW, New Brighton; 651-633-4311. Through April 26 - SHEILA REGAN

FRIDAY 1/29

ART/GALLERY CLOUDS, TEMPORARILY VISIBLE

FREDERICK R. WEISMAN ART MUSEUM Anyone who has ever lost a carefree moment gazing at clouds should appreciate the Weisman Art Museum's new-

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est exhibition, "Clouds, Temporarily Visible." At the thematic core of the show is the work of American painter Jon Schueler, who devoted much of his artistry to depicting the panoramic majesty of the Scottish skies. In particular, "Clouds, Temporarily Visible" will spotlight the work Schueler created in Mallaig, a Highlands fishing village near the remote Isle of Skye. The evocative allure of these skyscapes will be heightened by a supplemental collection of cloud-inspired works from a diverse range of artists, including photo studies from Edward Weston, video/installation displays from Yu-Wen Wu, and prints from 19th-century landscape artist John Constable. Of particular note is a "light-bulb cloud" installation created by Caitlind r.c. Brown and Wayne Garrett, two artists who will be present this Friday as part of the exhibition's preview party, a gala featuring a screened documentary on Schueler, a dance performance by Pramila Vasudevan of Aniccha Arts, and an invitation to join the Cloud Appreciation Society. The opening reception Friday, January 29, runs from 7 to 10 p.m. 333 E. River Rd., Minneapolis; 612-625-9494. Through May 22 -BRAD RICHASON

COMEDY

JULIAN MCCULLOUGH

SISYPHUS BREWING

Comedian and actor Julian McCullough has enjoyed more success in the last decade than most performers experience in their entire careers. McCullough cut his teeth on the New York standup circuit in the mid-2000s, becoming a mainstay at revered clubs such as the Comedy Cellar and Carolines on Broadway. Since then, he's forayed into acting and performing with appearances on *Inside Amy Schumer* and NPR's *This American Life*. He was also was a regular on the now-defunct but highly popular E! series *Chelsea Lately*.

Despite his burgeoning acting career, McCullough hasn't abandoned standup. And it's no wonder. His gently waggish demeanor, coupled with his wry observational skills, make him a distinct talent that boasts mass appeal. Locals Adam Quesnell (StandUp! Records) and Turner Barrowman (Boy Kisses Comedy) will open. \$10. 8 & 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. 712 Ontario Ave. W. #100, Minneapolis; 612-444-8674. **Through Saturday -RAGHAV MEHTA**

HAPPENSTANCE: A COLLECTION OF STREET PHOTOGRAPHS

TRAFFIC ZONE CENTER FOR VISUAL ART When was the last time you paid attention to your surroundings in public? "Happenstance," an exhibition featuring Martha Gabriela Driessen's black-andwhite street photography, shows how striking images of quotidian life can be. Whether outside a mosque, in the stands at a baseball game, or on a ferry, Driessen's subjects are captured, often unaware, by her impeccable eye. Driessen, who is originally from Mexico City, began experimenting with photography in her teen years after receiving a Polaroid camera as a gift. Influenced by the likes of Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Tina Modotti, her aesthetic is simple, timeless, and unassuming. The Minneapolis-based photographer has traveled everywhere, including Cuba, Turkey, Argentina, and India. She finds a common thread in the beauty and humanity of everyday existence. "I want my work to provide a space for the ordinary and the conventional because I believe it's those moments that, collectively, make life extraordinary," she says. There will be a public reception from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, February 4. 250 Third Ave. N.,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ▶



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UPCOMING

A-LIST

CONTINUED FROM FRIDAY ▶

Minneapolis; 612-247-1244. **Through March 11 -ERICA RIVERA**

SATURDAY 1/30

DANCE

HUBBARD STREET DANCE CHICAGO

NORTHROP

Sensual, spirited Hubbard Street Dance Chicago returns to Minneapolis with a four-pronged program of contemporary dance for a one-night-only engagement at the Northrop. The evening begins with Canadian Crystal Pite's somber "Solo Echo," a wintry, snowflaked meditation inspired by a Mark Strand poem. It's followed by "N.N.N.N." an all-male quartet number from American William Forsythe. "Second to Last" is a romantic couples' piece by Spaniard Alejandro Cerrudo. The big draw (and closer) of the night is the Mediterranean-themed "Gnawa," created by Valencia-born Nacho Duato specifically for Hubbard Street's company. A group of lithe, sinewy dancers in beige-colored attire swarm the stage to the sounds of Spanish guitar, North African drums, and Sufi-infused Moroccan song. It appears less like choreography and more like a collective, tribal burst of raw energy. Expect nothing less than an adrenalinefueled, exuberant repertoire from this critically acclaimed troupe currently in its 38th season. \$44-\$64. 8 p.m. 84 Church St. SE, Minneapolis; 612-625-6003. -ERICA RIVERA

FESTIVAL

NINTH ANNUAL ART SLED RALLY

POWDERHORN PARK

There's something undeniably exciting about building a ridiculous contraption in the hopes that it will successfully soar down a snow- and ice-slicked hill. That's the premise behind the annual Art Sled Rally. Each year, kids and grown-ups come together to build the wildest structures they can to send down a slope in Powderhorn Park. Past submissions have included a rainbow unicorn that seated quite a few riders, fighter-jetstyle sleds, First Avenue...as a sled, and a French baguette-type thing. Some creations zoom downhill with ease, while others fall on their sides with a graceless "thunk." No matter what happens, these DIY artworks are amazing, and will bring a smile to spectators' faces. Free. 2 to 4 p.m. 3400 15th Ave. S., Minneapolis. -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER

SUNDAY 1/31

SPORTS

PINGPONG TOURNAMENT

MINNEAPOLIS TOWN HALL BREWERY
For some, pingpong is simply a silly
game best enjoyed between friends or
siblings over beer (or Kool-Aid, if you're
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PARTY WINTERFEST KARNEVAL GERMANIC-AMERICAN INSTITUTE



ELEKTRA CUT

While many Saint Paul Winter Carnival events are family-friendly, this party at the Germanic-American Institute is decidedly grown-up. This Saturday, the haus will be honoring Fasching, a German spin on Mardi Gras. Things kick off with a happy hour at 7 p.m., so order up a drink or two from the bar. Taking the stage will be naughty cabaret-style entertainment from Elektra Cute (of Black Hearts Burlesque), and the Dangerous Fun Show, where brave performers will escape straitjackets and lay on beds of nails for squeamish thrills. Other things to be discovered include fortune-telling, a photobooth, and DJ music to dance to. Come in costume (think sequins, sparkles, fishnet stockings, and feathers), as it not only scores you \$5 off admission, it may also win you prizes during the costume contest. \$15; \$10 with a costume or Winter Carnival button. 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. 301 Summit Ave., St. Paul; 651-222-7027. -JESSICA ARMBRUSTER



Monkey Bar takes the stage one last time (most likely with tutus!)

PETER ATKINS

daylong tournament at Town Hall's West Bank location. Play will be round-robin style, with elimination games determining who moves on. No matter the outcome, competitors will eat and drink for cheap, as beer, apps, rail drinks, and some wines will be \$2 off during the epic challenge (whether you're still in it to win it or not). The winner takes home cash that will total over \$250. \$20 to enter; sign up by Friday, January 29. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. 1430 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis; 612-339-8696.

MONDAY 2/1

SOFIA COPPOLA'S GUIDE TO LOSTFULNESS

TRYLON MICROCINEMA

Delving into the inexplicable tragedy of five teenage sisters cloistered from the world by overprotective parents, The Virgin Suicides (1999) displayed an achingly palpable sense of alienation that has reemerged in all of the Sofia Coppola's subsequent works. Indeed, the theme runs like a common thread throughout Trylon microcinema's retrospective, Sofia Coppola's Guide to Lostfulness. In addition to The Virgin Suicides, the series includes the critically lauded Lost in Translation (2003), featuring Bill Murray and Scarlett Johansson as two strangers who meet in Tokyo and, despite vast gulfs in age and experience, are united by a kindred weariness. Isolation reigns over *Marie* Antoniette (2006), Coppola's historically irreverent subversion of a period piece in which the extravagant pomp of the French court is merely a diversion from hidden disaffection. Returning to the

present day, Somewhere (2010) concerns a successful actor compelled to reevaluate the hedonistic pleasures of fame when tasked with the responsibility of his 11-year-old daughter. Taken together, these four tales might deal in degrees of alienation, but Coppola presents each with an empathy that continues to connect with audiences. \$8. 7 and 9 p.m. Mondays and Tuesdays (9:15 p.m. February 8-9); 10 p.m. Saturday, February 20. Visit trylon.org/series/140 for a complete schedule. 3258 Minnehaha Ave., Minneapolis; 612-424-5468. **Through February 23 -Brad Richason**

TUESDAY 2/2

DANCE/PARTY INTERGALACTIC TUTU DAY 2016

BEDLAM THEATRE LOWERTOWN Intergalactic Tutu Day? Yes, it's a real thing. There's even a website, intergalactictutuday.org, with helpful tutu facts and resources, including how to make your own tutu (no sewing needed!). Coincidentally, Intergalactic Tutu Day takes place on the same day as Ballerina Day (February 2 also happens to be Groundhog Day, but who believes that old tale?). In any case, if you happen to have a tutu or you have a burning desire to make one, there's no better day than Intergalactic Tutu Day to do it. You'll have company over at Bedlam Theatre Lowertown, where a super-official Intergalactic Tutu Day celebration will take place. It also happens to be the final performance of Monkey Bar, an improvisational dance series from Non Edwards and Missa Kes. Tutus may or may not be involved in the show, Free, 6:30 to 10 p.m. 213 E. Fourth St., St Paul; 651-209-0597. -SHEILA REGAN









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UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 4-6 - THE BIG WU MARCH 16-21 - DULUTSEN MARCH 26 - POP ROCKS APRIL 1 & 2 - DOOMTREE

APRIL 9 & 10

MOUNTAIN MELTDOWN





NO GOOD DEED

Maggie Smith dresses down, but can't class up The Lady in the Van



PHOTO BY NICOLA DOVE, COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

BY MICHAEL NORDINE

he Lady in the Van continues the time-honored tradition of stories about outcasts helping their more well-adjusted peers learn about themselves and the world at large. The primary virtue of these characters - in this case an itinerant homeless woman played by Maggie Smith — is how their hardships enlighten the more fortunate (and, in most cases, oblivious) among them. Her story isn't being told for its own sake; it's being told because her bothersome but eventually rewarding presence affected the life of someone who had the wherewithal to tell it.

This was the same setup as last year's toxic Me and Earl and the Dying Girl, and it's one that would appear to promise rich rewards for dramedy lovers everywhere. Billed as "a mostly true story," director Nicholas Hytner's film is adapted from Alan Bennett's 1999 play of the same name. It

documents the 15 years (1974-1989) that the transient woman of the title (whose actual name is a matter of dispute) parked her van in Bennett's London driveway, thus making her something of a neighbor - not that everyone in the community treated her as such.

Smith's character is tolerated by wellto-do neighbors who trade charitable actions for the warm, fuzzy feeling of having helped the underprivileged. She parks in front of their houses, complaining about the noise generated by children practicing their instruments, and moves every so often from one part of the block to another. The film is at its most interesting when exploring the ways in which middle-class folks do good deeds — here consisting mainly of not forcibly removing the woman from their street, though they also deliver the occasional Christmas present or warm meal - in order to feel a certain way, rather than out of a genuine sense of altruism. There's very little selflessness in The Lady in the Van; only Alan (whose perspective the story happens to be from) doesn't lace his charity with resentment.

Alan is a writer, and for some unknown reason he's seen in his private moments as two different people: one who does the dayto-day work of life, one who puts pen to paper. The two stand next to one another, exchanging knowing looks and getting into small arguments. Both are played by Alex Jennings in what's easily the film's most pointless conceit - Alan isn't an especially interesting character to begin with, and doubling him only underscores his blandness. Moreover, whatever distinction there's meant to be between the two personae is never especially clear; the two halves would be virtually indistinguishable were it not for the fact that one of them is sitting at a desk. He isn't mentally ill or otherwise eccentric, and the movie as a whole has no other magical-realist elements save for one

THE LADY IN THE VAN

Directed by Nicholas Hytner Uptown Theatre, opens Friday

near the end that builds off this duplication.

The actual van-dweller, for her part, is exactly what you'd expect in a semifeel-good film of this nature: brash in a way that's meant to be over-the-top and endearing, with a sob story that gradually fleshes out her eccentricities. (It should come as no great surprise that she wasn't always homeless and that the circumstances leading to her decline were beyond her control.) Smith, whose comic timing has been put to scene-stealing use on season after season of Downton Abbey, does what she can with the material, classing it up as she herself dresses down. It's a valiant effort, but ultimately in vain — as with the lady's neighbors, this movie doesn't know what to do with her.



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DEAR WORLD

An oddball musical wrapped in politics and sweet romance



PAULA KELLER

BY ED HUYCK

ear World is one strange mumbo jumbo. It's a musical soaked in political allegory and wrapped around a sweet romance, based on a play written in occupied Paris during World War II.

At a charming cafe, a prospector angrily sits down and rejects an offer of champagne, insisting on a simple glass of water.

He isn't a teetotaler. The man is trying to sniff out oil. After years of hunting the streets of Paris, he thinks he's found it beneath the Cafe de l'Alma. He quickly engages the aid of three business leaders — the presidents — who hatch a plan to demolish the building to get to the liquid riches below.

Standing in their way are the eccentric denizens of Chaillot, led by the Countess Aurelia. This madwoman (honestly, that's what she's called in the program) isn't going to let her neighborhood go without a fight.

She gets help from a pair of equally oddball ladies, a clean-cut sewer man, and Julian, a young assistant to the presidents. But after balking at bombing the cafe, he joins the forces of good. That also opens up the tale's romantic side, as he and Nina,

DEAR WORLD

Bedlam Lowertown, 213 E. Fourth St., St. Paul (Thursday-Sunday) Open Book, 1011 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis (Feb. 4-7) Through Feb. 7; 800-838-3006

the cafe's waitress, quickly fall in love.

In one sense, *Dear World* sounds like a typical, if colorful saga of misfits fighting against The Man. But Jerry Herman's songs push it over the edge. The creator of *Hello, Dolly!*, *Mame*, and *La Cage Aux Folles* can't help but write catchy tunes.

A company of flexible performers allows the play to spritely fly along with an abundance of life and charm.

Janet Paone, as Countess Aurelia, plays this bright role with the right amount of emotion to make us care what happens to her and her cafe.

Paone, along with Thomasina Petrus and Christina Baldwin as the Countess' batty old friends, could have easily overdosed on eccentricity. Instead, they pull it back just enough so we keep our eyes on the prize — saving the cafe and all of Paris.

They can also sing. That's important since the accompaniment is seriously stripped down, a signature of Ten Thousand Things' barebones approach.







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FOR THE RECORD

How the hell do you sustain an indie record label in 2016?



Dig in boys: Peter Mielech and Tom Loftus of Modern Radio Record Label

SHARYN MORROW PHOTOGRAPHY

SARAH STANLEY-AYRE

an Smith, owner of indie-rock record label 25 Diamonds, once received the following advice: If you don't constantly think about quitting your record label, you're doing something wrong.

On the bad days, he says that's exactly what he thinks about.

"I could be like, 'I'm done, I have broken teeth and don't own a home and don't have health insurance and it's too fuckin' risky and scary," Smith explains. "Then you could catch me the next day and I could be like, 'Nope, I got hit up with a big project I'm incredibly excited to do and I'm right back in the game."

Running an independent record label in 2016 may seem like a masochistic pursuit. Sales of physical albums and digital downloads continue to tumble, and many artists criticize music-streaming services for paying out tiny royalties. In the face of all that, though, Twin Cities' Modern Radio Record Label, which was started by Tom Loftus, is still set to loudly ring in its 16th anniversary Friday at the 7th St. Entry and Saturday at the Turf Club. And other local labels continue to sprout from the depths of the Minneapolis underground, hopeful in their infantile stages.

Two years ago Ryan Wurst, the creator of Always Human Tapes, was completing his master's degree at the University of Minnesota while preparing for the new label's first showcase. Back then, everything was in a state of organized chaos — stacks of tapes strewn across concrete floors, surrounded by gigantic, looming electronic devices. The label was entirely self-funded, with Wurst responsible for the whole production and distribution process.

Now co-run by fellow electronic music maestros Peter Lansky and Josh Bestgen, Always Human Tapes maintains its grassroots model, but it's no longer "in the hole" financially, Wurst reports. Wurst still makes, cuts, and duplicates each tape alone in his bedroom. It's a labor of love and it's paying off, with orders coming in from around the globe and an ever-growing roster of artists.

"I could have not predicted anything with the label," he says. "And I think there was one point where I was like, 'I don't know, should I just stop?" Wurst recalls. For him, that nagging question of whether it's worth it keeps answering itself. "It's about continuing to put out tapes and good music, really, in the end," he says. That persistence has afforded him the ability to be even pickier about what to release. The label might even be expanding into vinyl territory.

"Tom [Loftus] has the same mentality,"

MODERN RADIO SWEET SIXTEEN

goes down Jan. 29 (7th St. Entry) and Jan. 30 (Turf Club).

Wurst says, remembering an early meeting where Loftus revealed, "There's no money. This is the stuff we wanna put out."

Loftus, who co-owns Modern Radio with Peter Mielech, thinks back on 16 years of passion, struggle, and rock 'n' roll as he digs through boxes of old concert fliers.

"Those moments [where it's] like why am I fucking doing this? Something answers," he says, grinning. "Putting art and music and things in the world is challenging but it's offering some sort of solution. You're creating an artifact that can be like someone's shield or point of pride, and inspiration that holds a value that is not monetary."

The dots are connecting themselves. At



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fri : january 29 7pm : laura and sean's movie and music trivia 10pm: the add+ons, the mad dogs of glory

sat: january 30

7pm : trivia mafia presents 331 drinkin' spelling bee 10pm : dead bundy and the neat neat neats and dj lazer bob

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MUSIC

the heart of the matter is the music itself, and the ability to have control over how it gets put into the world, financial rewards be damned.

"If we want to do something, we can just figure out how to do it," says Eric Foss, the man behind Secret Stash Records. The label started out doing reissues, licensing the rights to old, lost, or implausibly forgotten soul, funk, and R&B records. After releasing a compilation called Twin Cities Funk & Soul in 2012, Foss was inspired to begin recording and releasing new music as well.

"If you want something done right, do it yourself," Foss says - a common thread tying all of these labels together neatly. "No one can sell your records like you can."

These days, Secret Stash finds itself in a comfortable position given the resurgence of funk and soul music in the Twin Cities. The tiny label roster proudly boasts artists Sonny Knight & the Lakers, along with Afrobeat standouts Black Market Brass.

"The job of the label is to be a filter," Foss muses. "And if you put your cup underneath the filter and you like the taste of what comes out the other end, you'll keep coming back to that filter."

Foss says his fingerprints are all over everything Secret Stash releases. He says the label is less interested in buzz bands and more focused on connecting with people on personal and musical levels to create something that's "really neat and special" — another commonality among local indie labels.

"I want bands that I personally would listen to myself," says Ibrahim Al Said of Forward Records, another locally based label now operating on an international level. "I don't want a trendy label. I want a label that shows my taste or James' taste," he insists, referring to Forward's co-owner James Muschinski. Said once referred to the eclectic label as a "hobby gone wild," and lately it's become quite the formidable beast.

"Since the influx of vinyl collecting has gone so high, we've actually changed the shipping rate market in general," Said says, "and it's gone up 110 percent since I started. People are buying music; they're just buying it in a different way."

Forward Records shares a similar mentality with Secret Stash, despite the vast difference in musical taste. Said is quick to point out the robust collector's market to which Forward caters, noting the premium it places on special-edition pressings and other hard-to-find artifacts.

Business is moving rapidly for the upstart label. In years past, Forward would release one album each winter. This year four are in the works, and Said hopes to soon hold a showcase featuring locals Animal Lover, Scaphe, and Wisconsin hardcore punk band Tenement.

As established labels continue to grow, new ones continue to emerge - like Mind Rider, a brand-new label birthed by Nona Marie Invie (Dark Dark Dark, RONiiA) and Fletcher Barnhill. Like their predecessors, the operation is self-funded and run from home.

"We're interested in learning more aspects about the music industry," Invie says. "It's nice to be taking baby steps to get more people interested in the work that I'm interested in."

So, is running an indie label in 2016 worth all of the pain? Through the sleepless nights, ever-growing email inboxes, pennies scraped to make an idea a reality, sometimes it can feel like a hopeless endeavor. In a city like Minneapolis, however, music is more than a business: It's a community.

"Independent labels can and will survive on their own without the need of major publications or money," Smith of 25 Diamonds reinforces. "Because they always have, and always will."

Smith doesn't seem to mind that his label office is actually the closet of his apartment.

"People who are committed to art and creativity and expression are people who run labels," he says proudly. "Punks do. Artists do. Creative-heads do. People who don't particularly give a shit if they make a ton off what they believe in or their art form or their expression. That's who does a label in 2016." **T**

SEAN ANONYMOUS 10TH ANNUAL BIRTHDAY SHOW

FIRST AVENUE, FRIDAY 1.29

Aside from his membership in local groups Wide Eves, Bottom Feeders, and Dream Crusher, Minneapolis' Sean Anonymous has found success as a solo artist with introspective, post-Rhymesayers hip-hop. But while humility is at the heart of his music, the rapper still has style. When his verses aren't conversational, they can be dense and technical à la Eyedea or Aesop Rock. That,

combined with his memorable hooks and sample-based beats from producers Dimitry Killstorm and DJ Corbett, separates him from other, less idiosyncratic indie rappers. Considering his wide-ranging team of collaborators on 2012's Anonymo and last year's Better Days (including Minnesota peers P.O.S and Lizzo in addition to out-of-state vets like Del the Funky Homosapien and Aceyalone), it's no wonder his birthday party is always packed with guest performers. Sims, Greg Grease, Crunchy Kids, Sophia Eris, and

artist Chuck U will all be supporting this 10th annual celebration. Sean's third in a row in the First Avenue Mainroom. 18+.9 p.m. \$10-\$12.701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. -MICHAEL MADDEN

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION

FITZGERALD THEATER, SATURDAY 1.30

For better or worse, A Prairie Home Companion wouldn't be the public-radio staple it is without Garrison Keillor. As a viral 2015 Change.org petition by San Francisco resident Brace Belden made clearer than ever, some listeners have been miserably unhappy with the show and its longtime host. "There is absolutely a hell, and it's in Minnesota, and its demon king is fucking Keillor." Belden vented to the Willamette Week. Last summer, after years of teasing, Keillor announced not only his retirement but his replacement: Chris Thile, the mandolin virtuoso of Nickel Creek and Punch Brothers fame. Longtime APHC musical director/pianist Richard Dworsky and the Royal Academy of Radio Actors will be present on Saturday for Thile's first of two hosting gigs this month, but there's no telling how much the program might change when Thile officially takes over later this year. Keillor has said APHC is in the process of returning to its roots as a music show, and this weekend's guests -Ben Folds, Brandi Carlile, actor/banjoist Ed Helms, Sarah Jarosz, and Thile's fellow Punch Brothers - make for a stacked lineup. 4:45 p.m. Sold out. 10 E. Exchange St., St. Paul; 651-290-1200. -MICHAEL MADDEN

BABES IN TOYLAND

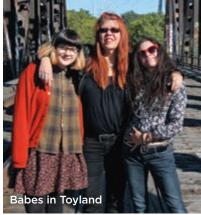
FIRST AVENUE, SATURDAY 1.30

Last June, in our cover story on Babes in Toyland's surreptitious reunion, drummer Lori Barbero promised the garage punks would be returning to First Avenue, and now they're making good on their word. Though the triumph of their homecoming gig at Rock the Garden 2015 is still ringing through the city, Babes will be coming back with a different energy, since they'll be without longtime bassist Maureen Herman (who left the band in August) and with 23-yearold local Clara Salver. It's a room in which the band has a lot of history. They recorded their last wax, 2001's Minneapolism (Live for the Last Time), in the Mainroom, so Saturday's show will test how that history holds up after 14 years off and more than a handful of lineup changes. Local punks Kitten Forever, who've been touring alongside their idols all year, are the openers along with Ageist. 18+.8 p.m. \$25.701 First Ave. N., Minneapolis; 612-338-8388. - JERARD FAGERBERG

CARNAGE

SKYWAY THEATRE, SATURDAY 1.30

Frustrated with the supporting role that



even the most ascendant rap producers find themselves pigeonholed in, Carnage gravitated away from his beginnings as a hip-hop beatmaker and toward the big business of EDM. It paid off for him seemingly overnight. The Nicaraguan-blooded, D.C.born, Guatemala-bred DJ is now a star in his own right thanks to his "festival trap" sound and cosigns from guys like Tiësto. With his debut album, this past October's Papi Gordo, Carnage showcased his genrecrossing versatility. It's a record packed with kinetic trap-rap bangers — "Bricks," "I Like Tuh," and "WDYW" - alongside jackhammering instrumentals and relatively subtle songs driven by pop melodies. While some question Carnage's belonging in the EDM world, the route he took to his superstardom is less important than the results. And, as he's noted, he brings more diversity to the EDM community in light of his Latin background. With Jauz, Valentino Khan, and Kayzo. 18+. 8 p.m. \$30-\$40.711 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis; 612-333-6100. -RICK MASON

HOUSE OF DOSH II

TURF CLUB, TUESDAYS IN FEB.

When local musical oddball Martin Dosh throws a party, he sends invites to his favorite collaborators. For the second installment of his annual House of Dosh monthly residency at the Turf Club, however, the polyrhythmic drone mastermind is eschewing his usual synergetic onstage free-for-alls for more introspective performances. Rather than reprising last year's nightly group jam, each Tuesday show will feature a solo set from Dosh and a second featuring different guest collaborators, including Andrew Broder, Aby Wolf, Eric Mayson, and more. Dosh says he's ditching the stage and setting up his musical lair in the middle of the Turf floor for House of Dosh II. Fans of 2013's Milk Money and other albums are in for something different each week, as Dosh mostly improvises his hyper-melodic tunes. \$6-\$8.9 p.m. 1601 University Ave., St. Paul; 651-647-0486. –Jared Hemming





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Safe & Sound

How do I probe his urethra?



Dan Savage

y husband has expressed an interest in sounding, something we've attempted only with my little finger. He seemed to enjoy it! But the last thing I want to do is damage his big beautiful dick. So is sounding a fun thing? Is sounding a safe thing? Recommendations for a beginner's sounding kit? Or should I scrap the idea and just get him another butt plug?

SAFETY OF SOUNDING

P.S. Here is a picture of the big beautiful dick I don't want to damage.

Sounding, for those of you who didn't go to the same Sunday school I did, involves the insertion of smooth metal or plastic rods into the urethra. Sounding is sometimes done for legitimate medical purposes (to open up a constricted urethra), and it's sometimes done for legitimate erotic purposes.

"But whether or not something is a safe thing depends on knowledge of the risks/ pitfalls and an observance of proper technique," said Dr. Keith D. Newman, a urologist and a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. "The urethral lining has the consistency of wet paper towels and can be damaged easily, producing scarring. And the male urethra takes a bend just before the prostate. Negotiating that bend takes talent, and that's where most sounding

Recreational cock sounders - particularly newbies - shouldn't attempt to push past that bend. But how do you know when you've arrived at that bend?

"SOS's partner should do the inserting initially," said Dr. Newman, "as the bend is easily recognized by the soundee. Once he is clear on his cues — once he understands the sensations, what works, and when the danger areas are reached — SOS can participate safely with insertion."

And cleanliness matters, SOS, whether you're sounding the husband or serving burritos to the public.

"Infection is always an issue," said Dr. Newman. "Clean is good, but the closer to sterile the better. And be careful about fingers. They can be more dangerous than sounds because of the nails and difficulty

So your previous attempts at sound-

ing — those times you jammed your little finger into your husband's piss slit — were more dangerous than the sounding you'll be doing with the lovely set of stainless-steel sounding rods you'll be giving your hubby on Valentine's Day.

Moving on....

"Spit is not lube," said Dr. Newman. "Water- or silicone-based lubes are good; oil-based is not so good with metal instruments." Using "glass or other breakable instruments" as sounds is a Very Bad Idea. Dr. Newman was pretty emphatic on this point. Anyone who's worked in an ER can tell you horror stories about all the Very Bad Ideas they've retrieved from people's urethras, vaginas, and rectums.

"Choosing the best 'starter kit' is not hard: Pratt Dilators are not hard to find online, they're not that expensive, and they will last a lifetime," said Dr. Newman. (I found a set on Amazon for less than \$30.) And when your set arrives, SOS, don't make the common mistake of starting with the smallest/skinniest sound in the pack. "Inserting something too small allows wiggle room on the way in and for the potential to stab the urethral wall," said Dr. Newman.

When the time comes, don't stab away at his cock with a sound in order to sound-fuck him. A quality sound has some weight and heft - hold his erection upright, slowly pull the well-lubricated, non-glass sound until it's almost all the way out, and then let go. It will sink back without any help from you.

Your husband's butt should be plug-free during your sounding sessions, SOS, as a plug could compress a section of his urethra and the sound could puncture his compressed urethra. And a punctured urethra is every bit as unpleasant as it sounds. (Sorry.)

Finally, what about coming? Will your husband's balls explode if he blows a load while a metal rod is stuffed in his urethra?

"Coming with the sound in place is a matter of personal preference," said Dr. Newman. "There is no particular danger involved."

P.S. Thank you for the picture.

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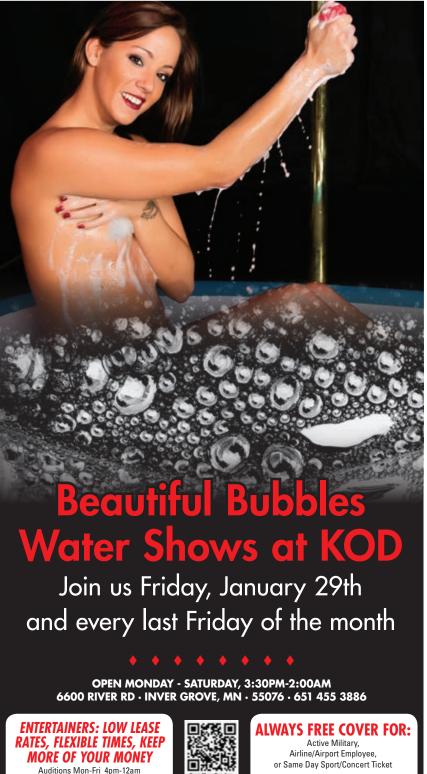






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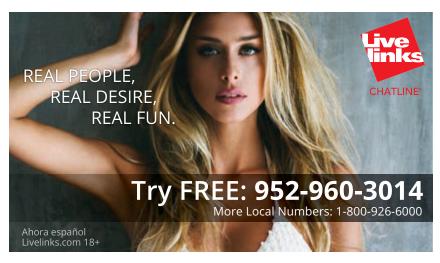
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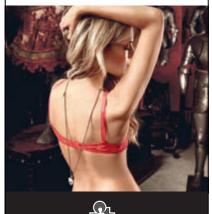
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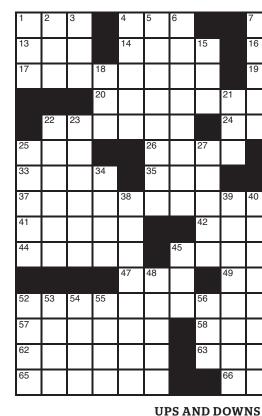
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- French seasoning
- 7 **Begins**
- 13 Chapter 3
- Pants that are dropped, for short
- Hold together
- 17 Arabian desert nomads
- Japanese noodle dish
- 20 Some deliveries
- 22 Locked up
- 24 Cheerleader's word
- 25 **Ouatro** estaciones
- 26 Bad outlook
- Author St. Johns 28
- 33 Loin letters
- 35 Place for experimenting
- 36 Admit as much
- Skyscraper transport with exactly two cars
- "How about that!"
- "___ of Saul" (2016 Best 42 Foreign Language front-runner)
- Quaint word in some 43 har names
- 44 "Toodles!"
- 45 Insubstantial
- 46 Under the weather
- Ice Cube's group
- 49 Room to move
- 52 1962 Shirley MacLaine **Robert Mitchum romcom**
- "Leave, Now!"

- Backup for emergency startups
- Some smokes Happening infrequently
- Chinese energy
- Appliance time saver
- Squeeze in barely
- Bad spelling?

Down

- 1 Sail
- Globe curse
- Tease playfully
- Publicity ___
- Comic who was in the fictional band The Rutles
- What may lie ahead. in a cliché
- Diving gear
- Two-time Emmy winner for "Veep"
- Ishmael's boss
- Start from the beginning
- NFL commentator Aikman
- Ottawa NHLers, familiarly
- Common port type
- Abbr. meaning wav passé
- Hammerlocked limb
- Shoe section
- Small lumn
- Q7 and A3, e.g.
- Like one considering gastric banding, maybe
- "Girl U Want"

new wavers And others, in

60

- a footnote
- With a regal flair
- **Shooter Adams**
- ___ Whelan ("Scandal" character")
- 1972 Bill Withers hit
- Vito and Fredo's family
- Hosiery piece
- Where one might get pinned
- Pull (from)
- 50 First name in mascara
- 51 Used tissue shape
- 52 Cumin meas
- Time's sign? 53
- 54 Look at
- The enemy
- "Silicon Valley" channel
- I. to Kraftwerk
- Pen or dam, for one
- Puffed cereal brand

Last Week's Answer VIII BUILL BUILLE

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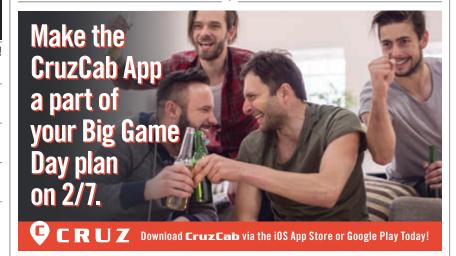
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